

Tribute to The Life and Memory of David Starkey



PSALM 86:5, 15.

You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. . . . But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

PRAYER

O Lord our God and Father, You have given and now You have taken from us. But even in our grief and pain, we continue to call You “Blessed.” We offer our thanks for giving us the life of this dear soul and for the gift of many memories. Most of all, we thank You for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We offer our thanks in Christ’s name, Amen.

TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF DAVID STARKEY

We have met today to honor the life and memory of David Starkey. I first met David about two years ago through Will Oldfield. I remember his first Sunday morning visit to the Oakwood Hills Church. His first visit was on a Wednesday night, and then he returned on Sunday morning. Prior to David’s attending the gatherings of the saints at Oakwood Hills, he led a rather wasteful life. After his second week in attendance, he told me that he did not want to be the way he was, but he wanted to be like the people at Oakwood Hills. From that day on, David, as far as I remember, did not miss a Sunday morning service more than once in two years. David was baptized into Christ on the fourteen day of April 1999. David, at the time of his death, was still a babe in Christ—twenty months old.

As a result of David’s activities in this congregation, there are several people that now attend Oakwood Hills, either directly or indirectly. David’s mother, who is a faithful

Christian, attends this congregation. And, as a result of David, his mother, Reita Starkey, and his niece, Jennifer Starkey, were both baptized into Christ on the seventh day of May 2000. Also, Gene and Mary Spradlin are members of this congregation as a result of David's invitation. David brought his mother to the Oakwood Hills family, but his mother invited the daughter of Roy and Doris Gallion to the congregation. And, as a result of that invitation, Doris came with her daughter. Today, Doris and her husband, Roy, along with their grandchildren, Timothy and Sylvia, are members of this congregation. This family is another great blessing to the Oakwood Hills family. I have mentioned this family to illustrate the blessings that have come out of the conversion of David Starkey.

A TRAGEDY FELT BY ALL

What has happen is a tragedy, and all of us feel it deeply. It should never have happened; we wish that it had not happened. But we cannot change the past. In fact, we may never really understand the past. The important thing is that we learn from this tragic event what we need to know about ourselves, about God, and about life. David, like the rest of us, is flesh. The flesh often times is extremely weak. But God is cognizant of our make-up. The Psalmist expresses it this way:

³⁸ Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. ³⁹ He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return (**Psalm 78:38-39**).[11](#)

“He remembered that they were but flesh,” reflects the tender mercies that God exhibits in spite of our frailties. Suicide is a very complex act, and we had better leave the analysis to God. The Bible does not talk much about suicide. In fact, it only records the suicide of six men: Samson (**Judges 16:30**), Saul and his armor-bearer (**1 Samuel 31:4-5**), Ahithophel (**2 Samuel 17:23**), Zimri (**1 Kings 16:18**), and Judas (**Matthew 27:5**). Of these six men, nothing is said about their destiny, except Judas. Judas went to perdition, not because he committed suicide, but because he did not trust Jesus Christ (**John 6:66-71**).

As everyone today reflects upon the life of David and his tragic end, I wish to call attention to King David as an example of how people should react. In his “Song of the Bow” (**2 Samuel 1:17-27**), he had only good things to say about Saul, a man who was guilty of many crimes, including suicide. Today, I want to look at the good aspects of David's life, the things worth remembering. The fact that David ended his life in a tragic manner need not detract from the lasting contributions made during his life in Christ.

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

As I think about the life of David and his faith in Jesus, I cannot help but recall the words of Paul in the Roman letter: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (**Romans 8:1**). David was washed in the blood of the Lamb. Just as God said to the Israelites in Egypt, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (**Exodus 12:13**), so it will be for those who have put their faith in Christ. God, too,

says to every individual that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” David was washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. It is my belief that the way a person dies cannot rob him/her of eternal life. What kind of love is the love of God in Jesus Christ? For Paul, an ambassador of Christ, God’s love is full of assurance. Paul expresses God’s love this way:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:38-39**).

This is an exciting truth. Nothing can separate us from God’s love. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, God’s love is still there. This tragic event in the life of David cannot separate him from God’s love. We are here today to hear a message from God’s Word that our hearts need. God never turns His back upon His children. His love is an everlasting love. I do not believe that God will let David down—or let him go. One day Christ will reunite His people and there will be a great reunion. Paul, too, speaks of the great reunion to the Christians at Thessalonica:

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.¹⁵ According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

DAVID’S LIFE IN CHRIST NOT IN VAIN

David Starkey cannot return to us now, but one day we shall go to him. For the present, he is enjoying God’s love and grace, just as we are experiencing God’s love. It is this love that links our hearts together until we meet again. In our hearts, we still hurt. We still feel the loss, even though we know the person is better off in heaven. Heaven should not be just a destination that we aspire to go to someday, but rather heaven should be a motivation. In other words, God’s people should build their whole lives on the vision of greater glory. David did this! David’s life in Christ was not in vain, even though his life was very brief on earth—thirty-nine years (See **1 Corinthians 15:58**).

PURPOSE OF THE FUNERAL SERVICE

One purpose of this funeral service is to declare the value of life. If life is not precious, then why should one weep over the one who has died? Life is precious, death is painful, but in Christ Jesus one can have true comfort. The words of Paul to the

Philippians ring loud and clear to every believer: “I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (**Philippians 1:23**). This statement is for the deceased, not for the survivors. In fact, Paul further states: “It is more necessary for you that I remain in the body” (**1:24**). Even though David is better off does not mean that the survivors feel better now that David is dead. Yes, we, in our minds, affirm the truth of God’s Word, but, nevertheless, in our hearts, we still hurt very deeply. Death leaves an empty place in the home and in the heart. Death is like an amputation that never heals. Having said this, for the Christian, the finality of death only brightens the reality of heaven and makes the “blessed hope” that much more wonderful.

MINISTRY OF COMFORT

Just as Jesus did more than send a message of comfort to Mary and Martha at the loss of their brother Lazarus, so Jesus traveled to Bethany and stood by the grave and wept. Today, just as then, the bereaved need the ministry of comfort. The church family at Oakwood Hills seeks to give the ministry of comfort to David’s family—to his wife, to his daughter, to his mother, to his brothers, and to his sister. We are to comfort one another. The words: “mourn with those who mourn” (**Romans 12:15**) is a vital ministry in this church. These words of comfort have focused in on the beauty of David Starkey’s life and how it had been exemplified in his life during his short span as a disciple of Jesus. It is never wrong to weep when loved ones are taken from us. If David Starkey could speak to us from the grave, he, no doubt, would encourage his brothers and sister and all his family to put their trust in the One who gives eternal life.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude our remarks to the life and memory of David Starkey, we are reminded that death teaches us of the reality of sin and the necessity of being born again. Our time upon earth is very short. Death is the great leveler—all equally turn to dust. The reality of death should remind each of us of the sovereignty of God. Moses writes: “You turn men back to dust, saying, “Return to dust, O sons of men” (**Psalms 90:3**). Death should also remind each one of the frailty of man. Again, Moses captures man’s frailties:

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. ⁵ You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning— ⁶ though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered (**90:4-6**).

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, we need a source of strength and refuge. We need a resting place. We offer our thanks to you for being this kind of help in the time of trouble. Bless the memory of David Starkey. We pray that David’s death will not be in vain. Father help each of us to think upon the changes that occurred in his life because of his faith in Jesus as the savior of the world. We know that life is a mystery; we know that for now we all see through a glass darkly. Help us as we seek and search for answers to so many problems in life. Grant us the peace and comfort that comes from trusting in you. We pray this prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen!

In Memory Of
David Patrick Starkey

Date of Birth
November 1, 1961
Battle Creek, Michigan

Date of Death
December 12, 2000
DeFuniak Springs, Florida

Place and Time of Service
1:00 PM Friday December 15, 2000
Oakwood Hills Church

Presiding
Dr. Dallas Burdette
Eulogy by Will Oldfield

Interment
Friday December 15, 2000
Crowder Chapel Cemetery

[\[1\]](#) All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.